

JOSÉ and CLARISA

By Mrs. IDA A. TAGGARD ARMS

: : : Concepcion, Chile : : :



THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY
of the
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

RINDGE LITERATURE DEPARTMENT.

150 Fifth Avenue, New York.

One cent per copy.

JOSÉ AND CLARISA

BY MRS. IDA A. TAGGARD ARMS,
Concepcion, Chile.

YOU must give these names, my children, their sweet Spanish pronunciation. Let me tell you how to do it. José is Joseph and you pronounce the word as if spelled "Hosay," while "Clar-ee'-sa" is much prettier than its English equivalent, which you have already guessed.

The two drifted first into our Mission Sunday-school. Perhaps the singing attracted, or some neighbor invited them. Her large black eyes scarcely wandered from my face as I taught the lesson, while he, over in my husband's class, gave scarce less fixed attention.

They were very poorly clad. I remember I wondered how she endured the cold, so scant and threadbare were her garments. The second, third and fourth Sundays found them in their places. At the call for registration, which is made after a month's attendance, we enrolled the two as pupils.

Soon after I went to visit them. You can never guess where and how I found them liv-

ing. At the rear of a small room occupied by one of our members, two sticks, about six feet long, had been erected. A pole had been laid across these and the whole covered with coarse canvas, such as is used to make coal sacks. The space was about four feet by six feet. In this room there was a bed, or what served as a bed, and one dry goods box. That was their home. That was their furniture. "Tell me about them," I said to the woman who had thus befriended them. "They are husband and wife," she said (this girl and boy of sixteen and eighteen). "He has drunk very badly and she has supported the two as well as she could by selling fruit on the streets. But now they want to be good. He doesn't drink any more and he is learning to be a shoemaker."



In a few weeks I visited them again. This time I found them in a real little room and he was busily engaged at a shoemaker's bench. The room was so low I had to bend my head to enter, but there was a window and a board floor. It was small, but I noted with pleasure that the bed now had two chairs as companions, a table on which was a very limited supply of dishes, an ironing-board and a fire-pan, besides the bench at which José worked.

I heard his earnest voice reading as I entered. What book was it? Why, the Bible. It was in his hand and our little hymn-book was in sight. He told me how much he enjoyed this new way of living. "I never knew anything about it before," he said. Faithful at all our services, attentive and appreciative, we wondered a little why they did not join our probationers' class sooner. It was explained when we found that the two had never been legally married. A journey must be made back to their native town in order to have this done. Twenty cents a day was about what they were earning at this time. But the money was slowly saved, and they started off one morning only to return to me in two days with the intelligence that the Civil Registrar demanded twenty pesos before performing the ceremony. (A "peso" is about thirty-six of our cents.) They had not that amount of money. It looked then like a small fortune to them. When and how could it be obtained?



Several weeks passed, and Sunday by Sunday we saw the shadows deepening on their faces. Then we arranged with José to do cobbling for the school and we would advance the money for a second journey. How glad they were! With them this time we sent a

note to one of the municipality, a member of our church in their home town, instructing them to present it and ask aid if any fee was again demanded by the civil official, as it is altogether illegal to charge for any such ceremony.

I waited anxiously for a few days, cheered only by a telegram which assured me that there were delays but all was well; then I was called one day to the door and met there my "boy and girl," and in the hand that he extended to me was the precious certificate, which was to be their passport into our little company of believers.



Progress upward was more rapid now. The loan was soon paid, a larger room was rented, a machine for sewing shoes was added to the stock in trade, and Clarisa worked busily all the day beside her young husband. Very soon we learned to listen for his voice in testimony and prayer. They passed their months of probation, and at the expiration of that time the one room was changed for two and a little later for three rooms, while patronage increased to such an extent that the machine hummed busily all the day, while José had two boys to help him in cutting, mending, etc. Some money was deposited in our care, books

increased on the little table; Clarisa came to the college for night lessons and José studied as he worked, or far into the night. "I must make up for lost time," he would say. But he worked too hard and sickness fastened itself for weary months upon him. Clarisa was now the keeper of the family, for a little boy, Carlitos, whose picture you see here with his father and mother, had come to the little home. Then followed weary days and anxious nights. The little store of money all dwindled away, the shop had to be closed, and several times we thought death was near. But no; God was training His workman, though only after months of slow convalescence did José tell us how God had been calling him for a preacher of His Word. "I can earn money at my shoemaker's bench, but God wants me to tell others of this wonderful salvation."



First as exhorter, then as local preacher, he proved to us the truth of this call. Our native pastor went each Monday to teach him—now the Discipline, then Church History, how to use the Bible helps, and where to look for helps. Thus, working again as strength allowed, he soon reached the position which by sickness he had lost. Clarisa wore a bonnet now, and no bonnier little boy than Carlitos was to be seen.

Working, studying, praying, waiting, last year we had need of such a man in one of our frontier appointments. We sent him with the understanding that we could pay him ten dollars a month; the rest he must still earn at his trade. Even that little was made possible by the generosity of personal friends. In six months a second preaching place was opened in an adjoining town. Early in this year a church was regularly organized there.

At the last Conference he, with his wife and two children, were present. Oh, how proud I was of the clean, bright faces of these children, their pretty dresses, their sweet, obedient ways!

No American mother would have done better and no American children did behave better. Last month Carlitos and Perside welcomed a little sister. "We have called her Nimfa," he writes, "in memory of him in whose house Paul had his church."



Listen to some words from a recent letter, and remember that this is the true story of those who eight years ago seemed lost to goodness and to God:

"MY MUCH-LOVED BROTHER ARMS:

"If the father really feels joy at receiving news from his absent son, not less joy thrills

the son's heart when he receives a message from his father. This is my joy to-day. I had ardently desired to receive a letter from you and was truly troubled at so great silence. Thanks to God that now I know concerning my parents 'in the Lord,' which parents you are. At your side I have grown in the gospel, receiving my religious instruction from you and receiving from God, as a recompense, the high commission to stand as a watchman in Zion. In this position I am happy. * * *

"The work here, thanks to God, continues until the present moment and is increasing in a wonderful manner. I have feared the increase has been so rapid that a 'falling away' would be experienced. I am striving to arrive at the fulness of faith, asking always for wisdom to guide the large number of souls that are seeking Christ.

"In Ercilla the services are all continued.

"In Collipulli we have an average attendance in the weekly services of from sixty-five to seventy persons.

"Every service brings new faces, and generally two or three show interest in their salvation. We have services, as in Concepcion, for prayer and experiences, with the good result that the young people are beginning to be quite active. Some distribute tracts, others call on friends and invite them to the services,

while others visit the sick. All are anxious to carry the gospel to other towns, and we think to go to Curaco and Mininco as soon as the rains cease. The parish priest has threatened to beat one of the brothers who is active in our work, but if 'God is with us, who can be against us?'

"I have organized a savings bank for the poor and for the current expenses of the church. All are pleased with this plan of systematic saving for the Lord. Just now we are interested in forming a band to lead the singing in our services. I am very grateful to God for all His blessings.

"My wife is advancing in her studies. She wishes to help me more effectively in the Sunday-school work. * * * Pray for me and my family that the Lord will give us wisdom to guide the flock of Christ. May God protect you and ere long may we see you here in Chile again.

Yours,

JOSÉ M. DIAZ."

